

To: House Judiciary Committee Members
Subject: Adam Walsh Act Compliance
Date: March 16, 2011

As a member of the House Judiciary Committee you will soon be considering bills to bring Michigan into compliance with the Federal Adam Walsh Act (Senate Bills 188, 189, and 206). I would like you to consider rejecting these proposals, and instead consider eliminating Michigan's sex-offender registry or narrowing it severely, because the registry does no good and is very expensive at a time when budgets are tight.

Research published in 2008 by the U.S. Department of Justice concludes that the New Jersey Megan's law (sex-offender registration law) has no effect on any of these public-safety goals:

- increasing community tenure (the time spent in the community prior to re-arrest);
- reducing sexual re-offenses;
- changing the type of sexual re-offense or first time sexual offense (for example, from hands-on to hands-off offenses); or
- reducing the number of victims involved in sexual offenses.

In addition, the research estimates that the cost to local and state governments of New Jersey of administering Megan's law in 2007 was \$3,900,000, and it has been going up. The authors of the paper question whether the cost is justifiable. Michigan is a bigger state than New Jersey, and Michigan's registry is much bigger than New Jersey's per capita. (Michigan's registry is the third highest in the country per capita.) Therefore the cost to government of Michigan's sex offender registry is likely very much higher than New Jersey's. The comparatively little Federal money that will come to Michigan as a result of compliance will not compensate the state for the expense of administering the registry. The Federal money is not likely even to cover the smaller cost just of expanding the registry rules to comply with the Adam Walsh Act if the cost to local law enforcement is truly taken into account. Several states have chosen not to comply just for this reason, most recently Arizona.

The paper is "Megan's Law: Assessing the Practical and Monetary Efficacy" by Zgoba, Witt, Dalessandro, and Veysey (<http://www.nj.gov/defender/news/MegansLawAssessingEfficacy.pdf>). New Jersey was an appropriate state to study because it is the state where the murder of Megan Kanka occurred in 1994. I have no doubt that if the study were also done in Michigan the results would be the same: no public safety benefit and high expense.

John Gourlay
12665 McKinley Heights Ct.
Chelsea, MI 48118